



Structural Funds: Investing in Roma

Management Committee meeting and Working Groups´ sessions

Mytilini, Greece, 2-3 October 2008

Minutes

Background

In the previous Management Committee (MC) meeting in Bucharest, May 2008, Network members decided on the objectives and functions of the three Working Groups (WG) established (Employment, Education and Social Inclusion), as well as how their work will be organised and coordinated, and to plan actions for the coming months.

Network members decided also to organise this MC meeting together with the first WG session; that is why both, Network members and WG participants, gathered together.

Information from Network members and presentations

There was a round of interventions of Network members to present their updates regarding Structural Funds and Roma-related issues, and some countries shared their recent developments of the last months. Among other news, Czech Republic presented a new publication on "*Success stories of the ESF projects in the Czech Republic focused on support and integration of Roma community*" (Czech version with a summary in English available at:

www.euromanet.eu/resource_center/search/29677/index_1.html

As external presentation, Mr Gerhard Welbers showed to Network members interesting results of a study concerning "*Increasing the participation of ethnic minorities and migrants in employment. Good practice and strategic lessons from EQUAL*", both his presentation as well as the draft report are available at:

www.euromanet.eu/resource_center/archive/31030.html



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There was also a round of interventions of Network members on their NAPincl 2008-2010 and how they approach the Roma social inclusion. Greece, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Sweden, Slovakia, Italy and Spain presented briefly their Plans.

At the Host Country Monographic, our partners presented the Greek National Plan on Roma (Ms Kalinikou, from the Ministry of Interior) and the Evaluation of this Plan, made by NGO "Oikokoinonia" (Mr Kalogirou). Both presentations are available at: www.euromanet.eu/agenda/archive/31085.html

And finally, Ms Giantsiou (ESF Coordination and Monitoring Unit) and Mr Kalogirou (NGO "Oikokoinonia") presented the project of "Socio-medical centres" (this sheet was already sent to partners).

Information from the European Commission

Network members were informed about the recent EU Roma Summit held in Brussels, 16 September, as well as of the Staff Working Document published in June, "Community Instruments and Policies for Roma Inclusion" (available at www.euromanet.eu). Considering the situation of social exclusion and widespread discrimination suffered by the Roma population in Europe, Network members call EU institutions to pay special attention to the social inclusion of the Roma. And taking into consideration that the Structural Funds are the main EU instrument for social cohesion, EURoma, being a European Network on Social Inclusion and Roma under the Structural Funds, seeks to become a key stakeholder in the process launched after the EU Roma Summit in order to improve the effectiveness of EU instruments and policies.

Management Committee: Main agreements

As regards the communication and visibility activities, and after the launching of the first EURoma Newsletter in June 2008, the web page is already available at www.euromanet.eu and was presented to members, and the second Newsletter will be ready in October 2008 (every 3 months). There is a commitment from Network members to keep on feeding both communication tools with Structural Funds and Roma-related news from their respective countries, as well as to disseminate this information as wide as possible among national key actors and through their own web pages. The European Commission was asked to include within its web page a link to the EURoma web page.

EURoma members agreed on inviting other EU countries to participate in next Network activities and the Spanish Government, through the ESF Managing Authority, as promoter of this initiative, committed to send a new round of Letters of Invitation to all EU countries in order to become Network members.



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There was a general agreement on the request made by the European Training Foundation to invite EU candidate and pre-candidate countries to Network activities with the aim of introducing them on EU mechanisms and dynamics on the use of European Funds addressed to the social inclusion of the Roma. As a first step, Serbia, currently holding the Roma Decade Presidency, will be invited to attend next EURoma meeting.

Network members were asked to present briefly their respective National Action Plans for Social Inclusion (NAPincli) 2008-2010, and how they approach the Roma inclusion. Given the relevance of the NAPincli to guide national policies and measures regarding the Roma, and the need for greater synergy between European and national instruments, Network members agreed on gaining more insight on their respective NAPincli. The Technical Secretariat will prepare an information sheet containing some key issues and questions to be answered by members. That would allow the Network to gather accurate information on what are the main needs still to be covered, how they are addressed by each country and what instruments are used. The sheets will be available at the EURoma web page. This diagnostic will contribute to assess over the medium term the progress and impact of the NAPincli on the social inclusion of the Roma.

Working Groups: Main agreements

According to the concerns and demands shown by Network members, three Working Groups (WG) were established: Employment, Education and Social inclusion. After the definition of objectives, working lines and main outcomes at the last Network meeting in Bucharest (5-6 May 2008), WG met in Greece for the first time.

The objectives established for the WG were of two types:

- On one hand, and following the Network objective of compiling information on projects and actions addressed to Roma and supported by Structural Funds within the current programming period 2007-2013, members should fill in the information sheets prepared for this purpose and share this information with the rest of Network members. This will be an ongoing process along the whole period and will provide us with a data base, available at the EURoma web page, containing comprehensive information on how the Structural Funds have been invested in the social inclusion of the Roma.
- On the other hand, recognising the existence of good experiences in EU countries as well as the opportunity of taking advantage of them, Network members decided to work on the basis of Best Practices. Network members had previously agreed on main criteria for the selection of Best Practices and following a common sheet, they should have selected Best Practices from their respective countries to be discussed at the WG. The main outcome will be a Bank of Best Practices, commonly agreed by Network members, which will also



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be available at the EURoma web page. Further activities (study visits, seminars, training and awareness-raising actions, etc.) will be organised on the basis of the selected Best Practices.

Participants were well aware of the heterogeneity of criteria among participants and the different approaches towards projects, as well as different levels of involvement; therefore each WG is expected to develop its own process at different speeds. Brief summary of main agreements:

- Working Group on Employment. With the support of the Czech representative as WG Coordinator, and together with the Technical Secretariat, participants discussed for long on the 5 experiences proposed by members. There were proposals from Sweden, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Spain and Italy. The debate focused on criteria such as the effectiveness and impact of the projects, their transferability to other contexts and countries, the sustainability of the projects, and their empowerment capacity. After in-depth debate, participants selected the experience proposed by Spain, the Acceder Programme, to be analysed more in detail.

It was agreed to organise a study visit to Spain at the end of February 2009. Following the peer review method, there will be a previous report on the topic analysing the context of the project, main objectives, actions and results, as well as the keys for success and the limits faced. The WG will present this report together with the conclusions of the study visit to the next Management Committee meeting.

- Working Group on Education. Participants presented two projects, from Spain and Slovakia. There was a lively debate on issues such as how to address the early drop out of Roma children or how to promote inclusive educational systems rather than segregated ones. Each participant explained the approach and strategies used in their respective countries. After discussion, participants decided to contact other organisations or institutions at national and international level (European Commission, Roma Education Fund, UNESCO, etc.) to get information on other successful projects (deadline for submitting proposals: 2nd November 2008) and to select one of them to be analysed through a study visit (February-March 2009). Participants agreed to invite DG Education and Culture to take part at next WG sessions.
- Working Group on Social inclusion. There were two proposals to be presented by Spain and Greece, both of them related to housing; however, since this WG includes a number of different topics, the discussion turned to other issues and participants selected several topics to be dealt with in the near future:

- how to create partnership, how to involve Roma organisations in the projects and provide capacity building



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- how to engage local and regional authorities in the social inclusion of Roma
- which are the projects' coordination and monitoring structures in the different countries, how each of them solve the problem of lack of synergy and coordination of actions
- strategies to improve the housing situation of the Roma, taking into consideration examples of urban rehabilitation as well as rural initiatives. In this regards, Network should require support from ERDF and DG Agriculture in order to have more accurate information of available funds.
- how to approach the health situation of the Roma population in terms of life expectancy but also the access to health care system.

Participants agreed as a first step to focus on the third topic mentioned and to prepare for next meeting (April 2009) a map of what are the procedures and mechanisms used in each country for the coordination and monitoring of projects. Next WG actions will focus on the role of municipalities and NGOs as well as on administrative capacity.

From now on, each WG will have its own communications. Technical Secretariat and Coordinators will be in charge of this task.

Finally, there were some proposals for holding next Presidencies of the Network:

2 nd semester 2009	Sweden
1 st semester 2010	Spain
2 nd semester 2010	Poland

Technical Secretariat will receive in the following weeks proposals for coming Presidency (1st semester 2009)¹. Next Management Committee meeting will take place in April 2009.

Network members thanked the Greek partners for hosting this meeting and congratulated them for the organisation.

¹ TS has already received an offer from Hungary



Next steps to be taken

Action	Who	Deadline
Sending information for 2 nd EURoma Newsletter	All Network members	24 th October 2008
Sending information for web page	All Network members	Ongoing process
Sending Information sheets on EU projects	All Network members	Ongoing process
Drafting a guide on NAPincl	Technical Secretariat	Mid-November 2008
Filling in the NAPincl guide	All Network members	Before next MC meeting
New round of Letters of Invitation to other EU countries	Spanish ESF Managing Authority	November-December 2008
Contacts with ETF for involvement of EU candidate and pre-candidate countries	Technical Secretariat	November-December 2008
Fixing a date for next MC meeting	Hungarian partners together with TS	Before December 2008
Organisation of next MC meeting	Hungarian partners together with TS	Before April 2009
Next MC meeting	All Network members	April 2009

WG Education

Sending proposals for Best Practices to TS and Coordinator	All WG participants	Before 2 nd November
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WG Social Inclusion

Drafting a proposal for the map (questions and topics)	Technical Secretariat together with Coordinator	Before the end of November 2008
Filling in the map	All WG participants	Before next WG session
Next WG session	All WG participants	April 2009

WG Employment

Preparation of study visit (documents, organisation, etc.)	TS with the support of WG participants	Before February 2009
Study visit	TS and WG participants	February 2009